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ABSTRACT

The effects of infusing tradebooks into the school and home environments of non-White, low socioeconomic status, urban third through fifth graders were studied. Tradebooks are books with a purpose that is not school-based. The study was conducted in an urban kindergarten through grade 5 school in the Los Angeles (California) area, where 59 percent of the students are Hispanic American and 40 percent are Black. An action research approach was chosen. Every target classroom was provided with a book box of tradebooks on various subjects for students to read and share at home. Students were interviewed about their use of these books and their attitudes toward reading. Entry and exit interviews with more than 100 children indicated that many had non-school based materials at home, mostly stories based on films or television. From entry to exit there was little stated change in children's expressed attitudes toward reading, but their responses to the availability of these books were favorable. Although no conclusive proof of the importance of tradebooks for promoting developmental reading is offered, some striking comments by children and adults do demonstrate positive effects of providing reading material. Eleven tables present study findings. Appendix A is the letter used to solicit research assistants. Appendix B contains the interview instruments. Appendix C is the project evaluation form for the research assistants. (SLD)

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THE EFFECT OF TRADEBOOKS FOR HOME READING ON THE READING ATTITUDES OF NON-WHITE 3RD - 5TH GRADERS

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In mainstream American society there is no more important skill than being able to read. According to Bettleheim and Zelan (1982):

> If the child did not know it before, it will soon be impressed on him that of all school learning, nothing compares in importance with reading; it is of unparalleled significance (p. 5).

Reading habits of children in school settings have been studied widely as researchers look for patterns to explain the disparate reading abilities of ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse learners. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) cite numerous studies in The Reading Crisis, their report of a study of the relationship between school and home effects on literacy and language. Strong literacy environments were provided in homes

> if parents provided literary experiences to the children by reading to them, buying them books, teaching them to read, and expressing high educational expectations for them (p. 129).

Further, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill, in Unfulfilled Expectations: Home and School Influences on Literacy (1991), argue that the effects of inadequate support for literacy in the home or in the school can only be counteracted by a very strong literacy environment in the other area. They also contend, in Chall et al (1990), that "on the whole, the home seems to be less able to compensate for poor schooling, particularly at the upper elementary grades" (p. 135). Therefore, it would seem that the role of the school in maintaining and/or enhancing the literacy of older children is ultimately the crucial element.

School reading programs, whether whole-language or skill centered, which rely on basal and other reading texts kept at the school site, seem to be based on a supposition that the home literacy environment is a separate issue from the school reading program. It is the contention of the writer that a nurturing home literacy environment must be an integral part

of a child's reading program; if the home cannot or does not provide this environment, in the early grades the school must intercede to provide the elements of a home literacy environment; and, in the upper elementary grades, the school must continue to support the established conditions for positive later academic achievement.

Studies on the availability of tradebooks and other reading materials outside a school site seem to indicate that there is little chance of low socio-economic school-age children interacting with text except in the traditional educational setting, the classroom, unless special opportunities are provided such as accessible family literacy, public library, or community programs (Strong, 1988). Further, an initial review of the literature seems to corroborate that elementary schools normally do not provide children with supplementary home reading to compensate for that lack of opportunity. One pilot study was found, conducted with suburban, middle/high socio-economic seventh grade students, which seems to indicate that home reading during elementary school had been significant in establishing positive attitudes toward reading and readers (Beers, personal communication, 1990).

The literature concerning school and family literacy was reviewed from 1982 - 1991 to see if there were data to support the need for further study of the importance of home reading and parental involvement in reading achievement and positive attitudes to reading and readers. Five areas were reviewed: elementary school tradebook programs, general home reading programs, intergenerational literacy programs, and school and family interaction programs with tradebooks. Data were found in the areas of general home reading programs and intergenerational literacy programs.

Although originally designed to meet the needs of adult students enrolled in remedial reading classes as a community college, the Parent Reader's Program (Handel & Goldsmith, 1989) involved the practice of reading comprehension strategies using children's books prior to home reading with children. Parents shared these experiences in group discussion during class time. The purpose of the program was to provide enjoyable learning experiences that adult family members could replicate with their children at home to the benefit of both generations. Results indicated that intergenerational connections were made. The parents who read to their children were stimulated to read more for themselves and applied the taught reading comprehension strategies in seeking to understand both the children's books and their own class required adult selections. No data on the child's reading attitudes or ability were given.

Kroeger (1991) looked at the effectiveness of parental reinforcement at home of reading skills taught at school. Parents of first grade Chapter I students were trained to use basal materials and the paired-reading concept. A reading assessment test was used to pre- and posttest the children. Parents and children also completed entry and exit surveys on attitude and involvement in the reading process. The results after a 10 week period were affirmative in all cases indicating that children who were assisted by their parents improved their reading skills at least two reading levels and the interests and attitudes of both the children and the parents toward reading and involvement became more positive. No tradebooks or children's literature was used in the study.

Parent participation and reading programs were studied in the U.K. and the findings published in Paired Learning: Tutoring by Non-Teachers (1989) a publication of the Kirklees

Metropolitan Council, Hudderfield, England. The monograph reports on nine diverse programs which involve children and their parents across the curriculum. Most of the articles describe the use of parent participation in direct instruction and tutoring of spelling, math operations, handwriting, skills based reading, and health education. No data were found on the use of children's literature or improvement of interest or attitude.

Yaden (1989) studied the unprompted questions that preschooler's ask during story reading with their parents. He concluded that home reading may affect comprehension more than print awareness. No data appeared on the improvement of interest in or attitude toward reading.

In a study conducted with children for whom English serves as a second language, Osiobe (1988) found that home factors known to favor early reading in the primary language such as books in the home, parent-child reading, and book borrowing from the library and friends, were also fundamental in promoting reading ability, interest and positive attitudes toward reading in English as a second language.

The number and quality of home literacy experiences affected kindergarten children's ability to cope with unfamiliar content in Greer and Mason's study (1988) of the impact of the home literacy environment on public and private kindergartners' recall of topically familiar and unfamiliar information. The frequency of the home literacy experiences were assessed. No specific questions looked at the genre or types of passages used in the home.

Rasinski (1987) studied third and fifth grade children's home reading habits. Data analysis revealed a significant difference between high- and low ability students (as determined by reading stanines from the school) in frequency of home reading, suggesting

that high-ability readers, at both third and fifth grade, did engage in home reading activities more often than low-ability readers. These findings confirmed earlier studies.

In 1986, Juliebo reported on the differences between home and literacy experiences of a small group of Canadian kindergarten children. She concluded that literacy development at this age "appeared to be more the result of the activities at home rather than at school."

Siders and Sledjeski (1982), in their study of parental involvement related to children's attitudes and achievement in the acquisition of reading skills, found that when second and third grade teachers emphasized home reading activities with parent involvement their students made greater gains in reading achievement with more positive attitudes toward reading than when home reading was not emphasized. The results also indicated that the emphasis did not increase the frequency of home reading activities.

In none of the studies were concrete data found on the relationship between home reading of tradebooks and the development of positive attitudes toward readers and the ability to read in low socio-economic, non-white, urban settings.

To address the need for information on this subject, this study examined the effect of infusing tradebooks into the school and the home environment of non-white, low socio-economic, urban 3rd-5th graders .

More specifically, the following research objectives were designed for this study:

1. To identify and report the existing research on the relationship of home and school reading activities of elementary school children.

2. To investigate home and school reading activities among children who have no or little traditional story print forms as a part of their preschool and present home experience.

3. To examine and analyze the attitudes toward reading and toward readers before and after home reading activities have been instituted.

4. To determine the effect of home reading activities on a child's perceived reading ability.

5. To provide data on the importance of tradebooks in the home in an urban child's developmental reading program.

The study was conducted in an K-5 school located in the urban southwest section of the Los Angeles Basin. The school accommodates 700 students with the following ethnic breakdown (based on 1989 school census report): 59% Hispanic, 40% African American; 1% Asian/ Pacific Islander. 50% of the student have been designated through state/federal testing as Limited English Proficient (LEP). On the 1988 California Achievement Test, the students at all grade levels scored in the bottom quartile in all subjects. The school qualifies for Chapter I federal funding and the school breakfast and lunch programs.

In 1990, with the additional resources of private industry, foundations, and other funding agencies, university faculty from the School of Education at California State University Dominguez Hills and District staff began work with school site personnel in a variety of ways, providing an educational laboratory setting for the study of effective teaching of non-white urban elementary student populations.

Studying the children in this particular school imposed some limitations on the relevance of the data collected and analyzed. The educational laboratory setting with the infusion of additional resources including instructional technology, extra instructional aides for the classroom, additional instructional materials, staff development opportunities including on-site demonstrations and workshops as well as professional conference attendance, is not mirrored in other schools with the same child populations. This school staff is used to cooperating with researchers. The teachers whose classes were studied volunteered their students and received additional assistance from the research assistants who were assigned to them for the purpose of the study. Although family members of the children participating in the study were not interviewed, informal and formal contact between the school and the home, a requirement for enrollment in the school, was used by the teachers in their evaluations of the project.

Various names and labels are used in this study to refer to theories of reading, language and literacy, kinds of reading material, types of learners, and attitudinal as well as achievement and aptitude assessment instruments. For the purpose of providing clarity in the context of the study, the following explications and definitions are provided as points of reference:

Basal readers. A systematic approach to teaching reading which involves discrete learning activities as the primary approach.

Literacy. The ability to derive, evaluate, and articulate meaning from text.

Literacy environment. An atmosphere that supports and encourages literacy activities both by individuals and by groups.

Skill-Centered. A method of teaching reading by direct incremental instruction. Usually found in basal readers which do not incorporate "real" literature into their reading selections.

Socio-Economic. A government term that uses descriptors such as high, middle, and low to designate the monetary and social level of groups of persons. Low socio-economic level for the purposes of this study equates with eligibility for government assistance programs and/or "poverty status" as determined by government programs.

Sustained Silent Reading. A specific time set aside when everyone in a classroom (or school site), including staff and students, reads material of his/her choosing. May not be scheduled daily, but must be scheduled routinely. Should not exceed 20 minutes at a time.

Text. The written word.

Tradebooks. Books whose purpose is not school-based. Children's literature of all genres not expressly written for school use.

Whole Language Approaches. Child centered, literature based interactive language arts experiences, including but not limited to reading, writing, listening, speaking.

Method of Study

One of the characteristics of action research, the method used for this study, is that it is

> practical and directly relevant to an actual situation in the working world. The subjects are the classroom students, the staff, or others with whom... [the researcher is] primarily involved. (Isaac & Michael, p.55)

Action research is empirical in the sense that it relies on actual observations and behavioral data. Therefore, in order to be systematic, the researcher must provide frequent opportunities for the participants to register their observations and a procedure must be

designed to record relevant demographic and behavioral data. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by the use of surveys with the children's teachers and the research assistants, and the audio-taped student entrance and exit interviews from pre-set guide questions.

In order to implement Objectives 2 and 3 of the study, six research assistants were hired and trained in observational and interview techniques. They were also given instruction in reading aloud to groups and individual children and a copy of Short and Pierce's Talking About Books (1990) to use as reference. Each assistant was placed in a classroom, two at each of the three grade levels targeted for the study (3-5). The teachers in these classroom volunteered for the program and met together with the researcher prior to the selection of the assistants (See Appendix A).

Next the children involved in the study were interviewed by the assistants using audio-tape and pre-set questions (See Appendix B). Also during that time, the assistants worked with the teachers to facilitate a positive working relationship. Every classroom was provided with a "book box" which initially contained approximately 35 tradebooks on various subjects, mainly stories. As the study progressed, books were traded among the classrooms and additional books were purchased, tripling the number of tradebooks available in each class. From these book boxes the assistants took samples for reading aloud and children selected the books during their SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) time. Next the students were encouraged to take the books home to share. A checkout procedure was implemented by the assistants to facilitate and record this process.

For a ten week period, the assistants worked with the children in their classrooms approximately ten hours per week, mostly during the morning language arts periods. Their activities consisted of reading aloud to the class, small groups and individuals, directing the use of the book box for class and home reading, and assisting the teacher in classroom exercises. During the last week of the study, exit audio-taped interviews were conducted by the assistants with the children.

After the formal study period was over, both assistants and teachers were given questionnaires (See Appendix C) and an audio-taped debriefing session was held. The book boxes and the books were left at the school for the future use of the children.

Results

The initial audiotaped interviews conducted with the children consisted of a preprepared script with six formal questions (See Appendix B). The research assistants employed various strategies to help the children feel comfortable with the interview process and explicated the six questions when necessary to obtain answers.

After having each student identify him/herself by name, the assistant asked them to explain what being "a reader" meant to them. These answers did not vary greatly and were not charted since there seemed to be few differences. In the third grade the following responses, "it's fun," "being smart," "learning... learning about...," and "being cool (hot)" were repeated most. No third grade child interviewed gave negative responses. Fourth graders answered with greater sophistication in some cases, but the answers were still about the same in tone. More of these children gave a "career slant" to their answers such as

"better education for a job," "getting a job," "helping others learn to read," and "writing my own books."

When fifth graders were asked about what being a reader meant, they tended to answer based on goals and their future plans such as "gonna get a good job," "be somebody," "do a lot of things. If you're not, you can't do a lot of things," " be a teacher," "help you to get A's, an education, and a good job." "educated for life," growing up and have [sic] a good education." There were many comprehension based definitions such as "understand what you read" and "learning things more better [sic], "going places with my imagination." No child in the fourth or fifth grade responded with a negative image.

The exit interview contained the same question concerning what being a "reader" meant to them. Overall few answers changed. The differences noted were not in substance but in the answer length. In all three grades the children went into greater detail about what being a reader meant than they had initially.

The next interview question, "Are you a reader?" had a variety of responses including the pat "yes" and "no." A table has been designed to show the entry responses by grade level, ethnicity, and gender. The exit responses are displayed in a second table by grade level, ethnicity, gender, and changed answer (from negative to positive or the reverse).

Table 1
"Are you a reader?"
Third Grade Entry Interviews

N= 29	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:	
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Male**	**Female**
Yes	19	4	15	11	8
Qual/Yes	7	2	5	3	4
No	3	1	2	2	1
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2
"Are you a reader?"
Third Grade Exit Interviews

N= 25	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:		*
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**	**XXX**
Yes	13	4	9	9	4	0_1
Qual/Yes	11	2	9	4	7	1_2
No	1	0	1	0	1	0
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0	0

***Number of changes from entry responses**

$_1$One child who had responded "Yes" in the entry interview changed to a "qualified" yes response in the exit interview. Her explanation revealed that she felt that "there were lots of books too hard" for her to read. Therefore she was not the reader that she had thought she was. A boy who initially responded with a "qualified" yes moved to a full "yes" response in the exit interview.

$_2$One child who had responded "No" in the entry interview changed to a "qualified" yes in the exit interview, explaining that he "had fun with the book box."

Table 3
"Are you a reader?"
Fourth Grade Entry Interviews

N= 26*	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:	
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**
Yes	22	3	19	12	10
Qual/Yes	2	1	1	0	2
No	2	0	2	0	2
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0

*Two classes of fourth grade children were initially involved in the study and entry interviews were conducted with both groups. Illness caused one of the research assistants to withdraw from the project before the exit interviews were conducted with one group; therefore, only data from the class where both interviews were conducted are included in the study.

Table 4
"Are you a reader?"
Fourth Grade Exit Interviews

N= 25	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:		*
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**	
Yes	22	1	21	11	11	3_1
Qual/Yes	0	0	0	0	0	
No	3	1	2	1	2	2_2
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0	

***Number of changes from entry responses**

$_1$One child moved from a qualified yes to a yes; two children moved from yes to no. With further questioning from the research assistant, both children said that they "only read when there was nothing else to do." They reasoned that readers read even when there were other things that they could be doing.

[2]One child moved from a no answer to a resounding yes, stating that he "loved the joke and riddles book." The other changes are explained above.

Table 5
"Are you a reader?"
Fifth Grade Entry Interviews

N= 42	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:	
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**
Yes	37	27	10	19	23
Qual/Yes	3	1	2	3	0
No	2	1	1	0	2
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6
"Are you a reader?"
Fifth Grade Exit Interviews

N= 42	All	Ethnicity:		Gender:		*
Responses	**XXX**	**African Am**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**	
Yes	36	24	12	18	18	3_1
Qual/Yes	4	2	2	1	3	4_2
No	2	2	0	1	1	1_3
No Answer	0	0	0	0	0	0

***Number of changes from entry responses**

[1]Three children moved in their exit responses from a qualified yes to a yes answer; two Hispanic girls and one African American girl.

[2]Of the four children whose answers moved to a qualified yes, three African American, two girls and a boy, moved from a yes down and one Hispanic boy moved from no.

[3]One African American girl moved from a yes to a no response. When questioned further, she stated that she was a "good reader in the reading book, but 'no good' in science and the book box books."

The research assistants were trained to prompt the children to expand on their answers. In these expansions the older the child the more specific their reasons for labeling or not labeling themselves as readers became. The fourth and fifth graders distinguished between reading tradebooks and the basals in school and reading outside of school. They were much more apt than the third graders to limit their outside reading to homework. There seemed to be a narrowing of the kinds of reading material favored by fourth and fifth graders. Many fifth graders were specific about being interested in science books. During the time of the study, science projects were assigned and completed by all the fifth grade students in the school. Fourth and fifth graders were very interested in biographies, while many fourth graders seemed fascinated by the joke and riddle books, especially the short paperback narratives by Stephen Manes.

One of the questions in both the entry and the exit interview asked the children to describe what they did when they first were handed a tradebook. Some of the prompts used to get at how the book was treated as well as how the children began their reading were, "Do you look at the cover? At the pictures? Read the title page? Begin to read aloud? Silently? Ask someone to read the book to you?" The following table (Table 7) shows the changes in the responses from the entry to the exit interview.

Table 7
Book Choosing
Changes Entry/Exit Interviews

Grade	Ethnicity:		Gender:	
XXXXX	African American	Hispanic	Female	Male
Third (n=26)	4	8	5	7
Fourth (n=26)	1	5	3	3
Fifth (n=39)	0	1	0	1

There were few changes in how students initially handled tradebooks at all grade levels, with the fifth grade the most unchanged. Students whose answers did change moved, in all cases, from "begin to read it" to a definitive selection process-- "I look at the cover, the title, and the pictures," "I read a little from the beginning to see if I want it," and/or "I look at the pages, how long it is." This last remark was found in fifth grade responses only.

All students were asked in the entry interview about owning books--whether or not they had books at home and, if they did not, what kind of books would they like to have. Table 8 has been designed to display the number of students interviewed who had personal books.

Table 8
Children with Personal Books

Grade	Ethnicity:		Gender:		%n
XXXXX	African American	Hispanic	Female	Male	xx
Third (n=28)	6	17	10	13	86
Fourth(n=25)	3	13	11	5	64
Fifth (n=54)	25	11	15	21	67

Of particular interest were the extra remarks in answer to this question. The types of books commonly owned by all the grade levels, ethnicities, and genders were animated stories primarily from Disney with a smattering from Sesame Street and the Ninja Turtle series. In the fifth grade there were a few "novels" and "fiction" and some nature books. There was almost a complete absence of ethnic literature at all grade levels interviewed except for biography in the fourth grade (Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were mentioned more than once). It is in this area that the language/culture background of the student interviewed seemed to impact their answers. Students who responded either in Spanish or in a combination Spanish/English did not have books in either language in the home. Fourth and fifth grade students talked of books that they said were theirs but that they shared with younger siblings. Third graders spoke of books that belonged to others in the home as being "theirs" but "too hard to read alone."

The exit interview included a question about their acquiring any or more books since they began to work with the Book Box in the classroom. Tables 9-11 have been designed to show the changes in their responses by grade level, ethnicity, and gender.

Table 9
Additional Personal Book Acquisitions
Third Grade

Responses	**Ethnicity:**		**Gender:**	
N=25	**African American**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**
Positive	5	11	9	7
Negative	1	8	3	6

Although 60% of the responses were positive regarding the acquisition of personal books, the interviewers found that the types of books acquired did not change from earlier answers. Titles such as The Little Mermaid and novelty books based on Saturday morning television programs such as the "Ninja Turtles" predominated. When the students were asked what books they "would like to have, over 50% responded with "animal books." It is interesting to note that the teacher of this group of students had purchased many animal stories for her class and had set up a "lending library" of about a dozen books prior to the study.

The negative responses of the female Hispanic students were only those who were not English readers; the male Hispanic students who gave negative responses to this question were a mixture of Spanish and English readers.

Table 10
Additional Personal Book Acquisitions
Fourth Grade

Responses	**Ethnicity:**		**Gender:**	
N=26	**African American**	**Hispanic**	**Female**	**Male**
Positive	1	16	10	7
Negative	2	7	2	7

Again the personal acquisitions were mainly animation books. In this fourth grade class, though, there were five students whose personal acquisitions were encyclopedias which two of them said were "too hard" to read. No biographies or other factual prose were cited although this inclass "Book Box" was set up with more non-fiction than the third grade.

Table 11
Additional Personal Book Acquisitions
Fifth Grade

Responses	Ethnicity:		Gender:	
N=47	African American	Hispanic	Female	Male
Positive	9	6	8	7
Negative	20	12	8	24

At this level there is little personal acquisition, but the use of the public and school library increases substantively, especially among the African American students. It is also interesting to note that in this group there is a heightened awareness of ethnic books especially among the African American male students. Also the students who did acquire personal books were less apt to have animation books than the third and fourth graders.

All of the students were asked about the use of the Book Box, whether or not they found it helped them like reading. In the third and fourth grade all the answers were positive. Students talked about "special" favorites and generally commented on how much they enjoyed reading the books in class and checking them out. The interviewers kept records of the number of books each student checked out and the number of times each book was checked out during the study. A comparison of the interview responses and these records show that over 60% of these books in each classroom were in circulation at any point in this section of the study. In the fifth grade, where fewer students acquired books of their own, the circulation of inclass books was much higher, over 80% at any point in this section of the study. Further, over 50% of these students used either the school or public library during this time, compared with less than 20% of the third and fourth grade.

Fifth grade students had a heightened awareness of fictional genres, commenting on "adventure" and "mystery" stories as being "fun" and "easy to read." They seemed to be more selective in their reading also; many commented, as did the interviewer in her evaluation, on how their peers influenced the books that they chose. If another person in the class had read the book, it was more apt to be checked out than if the interviewer or the teacher recommended it.

Three of the research assistants/interviewers evaluated the study as did three of the cooperating teachers (Appendix C). There were no fourth grade evaluation forms returned, neither by the cooperating teacher (who became ill near the end of the study) nor the research assistant. Both of the fifth grade groups did evaluate as did the third grade. The following results focus first on the perceived effectiveness of the classroom experience and the use of the Book Boxes:

> ...every child even the ones that can not read, want to read and they would learn if someone took the time to teach them...kids at this level have a healthy attitude about reading and that should be encouraged...The most rewarding was the excitement the kids displayed every time I mentioned that I would be reading a story to them (Third Grade Research Assistant).
>
> The variety of books motivated the students to read. I believe that exposure is the key to reading, exposure to a variety of books (Third Grade Cooperating Teacher).
>
> The children perceived me as a helper and a friend. They really opened up to me and reading in the small groups and the special activities we did with each book [sic]. They really wanted to learn to read better. They were motivated, happy, and excited to participate...The students were grateful to have books to bring home and to read in their free time (Fifth Grade Research Assistant-1).
>
> The tradebooks were a positive influence because some of the children in my classroom do not have books in their homes... The children felt more of a sense of ownership and responsibility because they <u>could</u> take books home (Fifth Grade Cooperating Teacher-1).

> Seeing three of my non-readers display enthusiasm for reading--finally. By being exposed to non-textbook books, these children viewed reading much more positively--almost fun!...Lower level readers learned to exhibit perseverance while reading because these were "fun" books--not school books...Children were very proud to take books home to show family members--great ego-booster to be entrusted with responsibility...when I had the Book Box open either during recess or right before lunch...there was less fighting over books!(Fifth Grade Research Assistant-2).

> ...the children because much more eager to read. They were highly impressed by having someone from a university come to read and share with them...the thought of having others care gave some students a real reason for wanting to read. They [the children] showed a more positive sense of responsibility toward securing and returning their books on time...they were allowed to take their books home; they had more time to read and reread for fun and understanding (Fifth Grade Cooperating Teacher -2).

The research assistants were asked to evaluate six whole language activities that they were trained to do with the children in terms of their perceived success. They ranked them in the following order (from most successful to least):

children read to me (research assistant)
read aloud to whole class
read aloud to small groups of children
children retold stories to other children
children retold stories to me
children wrote about stories

The cooperating teachers were asked to evaluate seven aspects of the project in terms of their importance to them in the classroom. They ranked these aspects in the following order (from most successful to least):

books available for the children to take home
assistance in classroom on a regular basis
books available in the classroom for reading (tied)
books shared between the children and the home (tied)
books shared between the children and the teacher
more books for the children to choose from
books shared between the children and the aide (research assistant

According to the evaluation forms returned the children had specific ways of choosing books and, in the two grade levels for which information was available, favorite subjects. In the third grade both the cooperating teacher and the research assistant commented on the way that the students approached a new book and the topics they chose:

> Each child would come to the book box and flip through the books; if they [books] did not have a lot of pictures, they would put it back. This wasn't just the students who could not read...they liked the paperback stories about families and interpersonal relationships.

One fifth grade cooperating teacher and her research assistant remarked on the science-based books, and both fiction and non-fiction books about animals such as dogs and horses that were most popular with their class. Biographies were also chosen by many of the children in this grade.

From the checkout documentation submitted by the fourth grade research assistant (who did not file a formal evaluation), the most popular books were short collections of jokes, riddles, and puzzles and a paperback series of an accident prone young man about thirteen.

The taped interviews substantiated the evaluations of the cooperating teachers and the research assistants. The exit tapes were much longer than the entry as students expanded their answers based on their reading experiences over the 10 week project.

Conclusions

This study investigated a group of children who seemed to have little access to non-school books because of language, culture, or socio-economic condition using a small sample of non-white and linguistically different third, fourth, and fifth grade students at an

elementary school in the Los Angeles Basin. The following conclusions have been organized by the specific research objectives designed for this study for ease of review.

Research Objective 1. To identify and report the existing research on the relationship of home and school reading activities of elementary school children.

This study has attempted to identify and report the existing research on the relationship of home and school reading activities of elementary school children, focusing on "at-risk" students. The literature search involved a review of documents published through ERIC data bases in reading, literacy, linguistics, as well as those of psychological abstracts and dissertations. Although there is a-relatively small body of research on the effectiveness of home reading in developing positive attitudes towards reading and readers, that which was found was encouragingly positive both in the effect of home reading on the children studied and the attitude of parents and other care-givers toward the reading act. Further research seems needed, especially longitudinal studies of the effect of home reading on student achievement in school and beyond. Also, no substantive research on the effectiveness of home reading with children who have little access to non-school books because of language, culture, or socio-economic condition was found.

Research Objective 2. To investigate home and school reading activities among children who have no or little traditional story print forms as a part of their preschool and present home experience.

From entry and exit interviews with over 100 children, it was determined that there are non-school based materials in many of the homes of the children studied. The types of materials varied, but the majority of story print forms were based either on animated films or

television programs for children such as The Little Mermaid or Ninja Turtles. After initial purchase, the books seemed to have little home use. Few of the children could retell the stories of these books. From the third to the fifth grade there was a significant change in the way that some of the children responded to questions concerning their home reading activities. Fourth and fifth grade children for whom Spanish is the primary language had fewer books in the home than did the third graders who were Spanish speaking. Beginning in the third grade, but most prevalent among the fifth grade Hispanic students, was a difference in the responses among male and female children concerning home reading activities and owned or shared books. The girls seemed to have many more opportunities to read and own books at home than the boys. The older the boy, the less likely he was to have reading material beyond that provided by his regular textbooks from the school. No questions or formal observations were made as to the cultural significance of this finding. Further study of the possibility of cultural and gender issues concerning both the reading act and "admitting" that one reads and/or enjoys reading seems merited by this finding.

Overall there seemed to be more reading material in the home than had been forecast by the school site teachers and the researcher. The type of material varied from Bible stories and encyclopedias to stories based on recent animated film releases and Saturday morning television programs. There was little variation in the amount or type of material from the entry to exit interviews. One interesting finding was that four of the children in the fifth grade acquired encyclopedias of some sort during the time of the study. It may be concluded that the tradebooks used in the study, which came from the school site, were not replicated by families when they purchased books for home use.

During the time of the study, many of the children who had no defined way of selecting a book to read developed a selection system which included looking carefully at the cover, finding out the author as well as the title, paging through the book, and examining it for illustrations. As the age of the child increased, the length of the book became a more important criterion.

No questions about the specific amount of time spent reading at home were asked in this study. From the data and the teacher interviews, it became apparent that additional study into the specific amount of time spent on non school reading is needed by gender and primary language as well as age.

Research Objective 3. To examine and analyze the attitudes toward reading and toward readers before and after home reading activities have been instituted.

Examination and analysis of the data from the entry and exit interviews shows little stated change among the children concerning their attitudes toward readers and reading. The changes that are detailed seem to be a part of a maturation process on just what reading does or doesn't entail rather than a substantive difference in viewpoint.

It is in this part of the analysis that an important finding of the study lies--the fact that the attitudes of the children toward reading and readers are positive both initially and at the end of a concentrated period of access to tradebooks for home reading. Their ability to read text and to enjoy story does not undergo a marked change, yet their responses to their **greater access** to a variety of tradebooks invariably are strong. They liked having greater access to a wide variety of books; they liked being able to take the books home; their attitudes were positive, but they were before access was provided. It may be that the time of

the study was too short to provide adequate data on a change of attitude or, knowing that they were to be studied or this feature, they told the interviewers what they thought was the "correct answer."

Research Objective 4. To determine the effect of home reading activities on a child's perceived reading ability.

Home reading seemed to have little or no effect on the children's perceived reading ability. They thought of themselves, in almost all cases, as either readers or non-readers at the entry and exit interviews. Their definitions did not change significantly either. What did change was the length of the explanation of their answers, to this section of the interview and to others where the questions required them to clarify and/or explicate a response. One explanation for this change could be the increase in comfort level with the interviewers that the children experienced over the time that they worked together in the classroom. Another might be the reading experiences themselves, giving the children extensive practice with narrative process and oral response.

Research Objective 5. To provide data on the importance of tradebooks in the home in an urban child's developmental reading program.

This study offered no conclusive proof of the importance of tradebooks in the home for promoting an urban child's developmental reading. There were, though, some striking comments by both the children and the adults involved in the study. Having access to a selection of non-academic books such as tradebooks, whether through the school, the public library, or ownership, was perceived positively, even by those who did not or could not read them.

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APPENDIX A

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

COMPLETE YOUR TED 305 OBSERVATION

AS A RESEARCH ASSISTANT

AT CSUDH'S MODEL SCHOOL

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY, CUSD

Earn your TED 305 credit and a $150.00 stipend by working with 3-5 grade students as a part of a research project to determine the effect of home reading on their attitudes toward reading and readers.

This project will be a part of a program to expand the library of Washington Elementary School in Compton, CSUDH's Model School Project.

Assistance is needed to initially interview the children, to work with their interaction with tradebooks, and to exit interview them. These interviews will provide the data for the research component of the project.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please fill out the tearoff and place it in the mailbox of Dr. Leni Cook in the School of Education Mailroom (HFA C-307) by Friday, February 8. You will be contacted during the following week.

For further information, call Dr. Cook at (213) 516-3905.

_____. TED 305. _____
Last Name First Name Section

(____)_____ _____
Telephone Number Social Security Number

RSCAAP Project/ The Effect of Tradebooks for Home Reading on the Reading Attitudes of Non-White 3rd - 5th Graders.

APPENDIX B

The Effect of Tradebooks for Home Reading on the Reading Attitudes of Non-White 3rd - 5th Graders

DATA CAPTURE INSTRUMENT I

Use the following script to introduce each student to the project. You do not need to have the tape recorder on until you identify the student being interviewed.

SCRIPT

I am going to be sharing some books with you in the classroom for the next few weeks. You will be able to take some of them home for reading and we will be reading them together in the classroom. After we finish with the books, they will be placed in the school library so all the children can check them out and read them. Before we start working with the books, I'd like to ask you some questions about reading and readers. I will be recording our conversation.

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW

Prior to asking the students the interview questions, please respond on the tape to the following items each day:

Date of Interview_____

Interviewer _____

_____ Grade Classroom. Teacher:_____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What is your first and your last name?
2. What does being a reader mean to you?
3. Are you "a reader"?
4. When you are handed a book, what do you do with it first?
   (Prompts as necessary: Do you: look at the cover or look at the pictures? begin to read it aloud? silently? ask someone to read it aloud to you?)
5. Do you have any books of your own?
   (Prompts as necessary: What kind of books do you have? What kind of books would you like to have?)
6. What are some words to tell me what you think about reading and books?

AFTER TURNING OFF THE TAPE, BE SURE TO THANK EACH CHILD FOR COOPERATING.

The Effect of Tradebooks for Home Reading on the Reading Attitudes of Non-White 3rd - 5th Graders

DATA CAPTURE INSTRUMENT II

Use the following script to review the project with each student. You do not need to have the tape recorder on until you identify the student being interviewed.

SCRIPT

We have been sharing some books in the classroom for the past few weeks. You were able to take some of them home for reading and we read them together in the classroom. At the end of this school year they will be placed in the school library so all the children can check them out and read them. Now that we have worked with the books, I'd like to ask you some questions about reading and readers. I will be recording our conversation.

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW

Prior to asking the students the interview questions, please respond on the tape to the following items each day:

Date of Interview_____

Interviewer _____

_____ Grade Classroom. Teacher:_____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What is your first and your last name?
2. What does being a reader mean to you?
3. Are you "a reader"?
4. Has having extra books in the classroom helped you like reading? Why or why not?
5. When you are handed a book, what do you do with it first?
   (Prompts as necessary: Do you: look at the cover or look at the pictures? begin to read it aloud? silently? ask someone to read it aloud to you?)
6. Have you gotten any books of your own since we started to read the extra books in the classroom and you could check them out?
   (Prompts as necessary: What kind of books do you have? What kind of books would you like to have?)
7. What are some words to tell me what you think about reading and books?

AFTER TURNING OFF THE TAPE, BE SURE TO THANK EACH CHILD FOR COOPERATING.

APPENDIX C

The Effect of Tradebooks for Home Reading on the Reading Attitudes of Non-White 3rd - 5th Graders

RESEARCH ASSISTANT EVALUATION FORM

During the months of March, April, and May, you have been working with a cooperating teacher from Washington Elementary School in Compton. You have been assisting him/her and working with the children using tradebooks provided by grant monies and donation from Bantam Dell Doubleday Publishing. Taped interviews with the children will help us to determine the effect these books have had on the children's attitude toward reading and readers. Also you are an important part of this study. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. A return envelope has been provided for you to return the form to my office. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What part of your classroom experience would you rank most rewarding to you? Why?

2. What was the most difficult part of your experience? Why?

3. What books seemed to be favorites with the children? Why? If you can remember any incidents to support your choice, please explicate.

4. Rank the activities you and the children did with the books in terms of success (1 = highest; 6 = lowest; N/A = not attempted).

read aloud to small groups of children _____
read aloud to whole class _____
child(ren) read to me _____
children retold stories to other children _____
children retold stories to me _____
children wrote about stories _____

5. What were some of the incidents between you and the children that you think were important to their reading interests and attitudes?

6. Describe a normal session with the children and the "book box." If you wish, describe one other interaction.

7. What did you personally learn from participating in this study?

8. Use the remaining space for any other comments you wish to make about your experiences or the project.

Please indicate the grade level of your classroom _____

If you wish the results of the study sent to you please provide your name and address below.

Name _____

Street Address _____

City and Zip Code_____ _____

The study should be written up and available in August.

The Effect of Tradebooks for Home Reading on the Reading Attitudes of Non-White 3rd - 5th Graders

COOPERATING TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

During the months of March, April, and May, you have been working with a research assistant from CSU Dominguez Hills. She has been helping you and working with the children using tradebooks provided by grant monies and donation from Bantam Dell Doubleday Publishing. Taped interviews with the children will help us to determine the effect these books have had on the children's attitude toward reading and readers. Also you are an important part of this study. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. A return envelope has been provided for you to return the form to my office. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Did the infusion of tradebooks make a positive difference in your classroom this spring? If so, please explain. If not, please comment on why the infusion was not successful.

2. What were the primary tasks of the research assistant during the study? Did the tasks make a positive difference in your classroom this spring? Why or why not?

3. What type of reading did you perceive the children to enjoy the most?

4. Did allowing the tradebooks to be checked out have a recognizable effect on the children's attitude toward the books and the study? Why or why not?

(See other side for more questions)

5. How do you normally use tradebooks in your classroom? Has this study caused you to make any changes?

6. Please rank the following aspects of the project in order of their important TO YOU as the teacher in the elementary classroom (1 = highest - 7 =lowest)

assistance in classroom on a regular basis _____
books available in the classroom for reading _____
books available for children to take home _____
books shared between the children and teacher _____
books shared between the children and home _____
books shared between the children and the aide _____
more books for children to choose from _____

7. Please make any further comment, suggestion, criticism of the project.

Please indicate the grade level of your classroom _____
If you wish the results of the study sent to you please provide your name and address below.

Name _____

Street Address _____

City and Zip Code_____
The study should be written up and available in August.